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Subject: Morality Is 'The New Black' - Edge Seminar 2010 - An Invitation

Date: Mon, 07 Jun 2010 19:39:05 +0000

JE,

Edge Foundation, Inc. is pleased to invite you to:

Edge Seminar 2010

MORALITY IS 'THE NEW BLACK'

Paul Bloom, Joshua D. Greene, Jonathan Haidt, Sam Harris, Marc D. Hauser, David Pizarro

URL: http://www.edge.org/3rd_culture/morality10/morality10_index.html user id: seminar2010
password: morality

Tuesday, July 20 - Wednesday, July 21

Eastover Farm

Bethlehem, CT

In August 2007, EDGE convened an historic seminar - "Life: What A Concept", in which Freeman Dyson, George Church, and Craig Venter, and others thought through the ideas associated with synthetic genomics. Only with the synthetic genome announcement last month by the J. Craig Venter Institute, did the full import of this discussion become apparent. Reporting on the event at the time, Andrian Kreye, Feuilleton (Arts & Ideas) Editor of Süddeutsche Zeitung wrote:

"Soon genetic engineering will shape our daily life to the same extent that computers do today. This sounds like science fiction, but it is already reality in science. Thus genetic engineer George Church talks about the biological building blocks that he is able to synthetically manufacture. It is only a matter of time until we will be able to manufacture organisms that can self-reproduce, he claims. Most notably J. Craig Venter succeeded in introducing a copy of a DNA-based chromosome into a cell, which from then on was controlled by that strand of DNA."

Jordan Mejias, Arts Correspondent of Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung, noted that:

"These are thoughts to make jaws drop...Nobody at Eastover Farm seemed afraid of a eugenic revival. What in German circles would have released violent controversies, here drifts by unopposed under mighty maple trees that gently whisper in the breeze."

I've been looking for an interesting and important theme for this summer's EDGE event, and one subject jumps out: In the past year "morality" has increasingly become "the new black".

In 1975, E. O. Wilson predicted that ethics would someday be taken out of the hands of philosophers and incorporated into the "new synthesis" of evolutionary and biological thinking. He was right. It seems like everyone's studying morality these days, reaching findings that complement each other more often than they clash. Morality is the new black. Using babies, psychopaths, chimpanzees, fMRI scanners, web surveys, agent-based modeling, and ultimatum games, moral psychology has become a major convergence zone for research in the behavioral sciences. So what do we have to say? Are we moving toward consensus on some points? What are the most pressing questions for the next five years? And what do we have to offer a world in which so many global and national crises are caused or exacerbated by moral failures and moral conflicts?

There are already some excellent trade books by leading researchers on the cognitive science and evolution of morals, by Dacher Keltner, and Marc Hauser and others, and there are more coming out, including Steven Pinker on moral change through history, Paul Bloom on babies and children, Joshua Greene on the philosophical implications of our emerging scientific

understanding of morality; Jonathan Haidt on morality and politics, Sam Harris on the "moral landscape", and Marc D. Hauser on our evil instincts. More than a few other notable people are sniffing around the edges. And I am sure that nearly all the researchers working in the cognitive sciences would claim that their work has something important to say on the subject.

Edge Foundation, Inc. invites you as our guest to join the leading scientists in this new synthesis - Paul Bloom, Joshua D. Greene, Jonathan Haidt, Sam Harris, Marc D. Hauser, David Pizarro - for an EDGE Seminar at Eastover Farm in Bethlehem, CT. Tuesday-Wednesday July 20-21. Other than handling your own hotel and transportation arrangements, there are no charges. The Farm, in rural CT, is 2 hours from JFK, a little over an hour from Hartford airport; 20-25 minutes from Waterbury-Oxford Airport.

Eastover Farm, originally built in 1773, was a functioning bed & breakfast when we took it over in 1992. The speakers will stay at the Farm. Guests make reservations at one of two nearby Inns, both nearby (7-8 miles) high-end, five-star resorts on the level of Auberge Du Soleil (where we held the 2007 Master Class): The Mayflower Inn - in Washington, CT and Winvian - in Lichtfield Hills, CT. Both are known for their excellent restaurants. It will be best to have all the guests together, so once I get a sense of how many people plan to attend, I will call one of the Inns, check availability (and hopefully arrange a special rate) and let you know.

The Mayflower Inn - in Washington, CT
118 Woodbury Road, Route 47, Washington, CT 06793

<http://www.mayflowerinn.com/>

Winvian - in Lichtfield Hills, CT
155 Alain White Rd.
Morris, CT 06763

<http://www.winvian.com/>

SCHEDULE

Tuesday, July 20th

3pm Speakers arrive at Eastover Farm
6pm Drinks
7pm Dinner either at the Farm or a nearby restaurant

Wednesday, July 21st

7:30am Breakfast

8:00 Session 1
9:30 Session 2
11:00 Session 3
12:30 Lunch
1:00 Session 4
2:30 Session 5
4:00 Session 6
5:30 Seminar portion ends

7:00 drinks and dinner at nearby restaurant

Below please find some information/links about previous EDGE events.

Hope to see you!

Best,

JB

rsvp: [REDACTED]

June 7-10 San Francisco | The St. Regis | [REDACTED]
June 11 Eastover Farm

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The Edge Annual Question 2010:  
HOW IS THE INTERNET CHANGING THE WAY YOU THINK?  
[http://www.edge.org/q2010/q10\\_index.html](http://www.edge.org/q2010/q10_index.html)  
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ABOUT THE EDGE MASTER CLASS & SEMINARS

The Master Class is the most recent iteration of Edge's development, which began its activities under the name "The Reality Club" in 1981. Edge's is different from The Algonquin, The Apostles, The Bloomsbury Group, or The Club, but it offers the same quality of intellectual adventure. The closest resemblances are to The Invisible College and the Lunar Society of Birmingham.

The early seventeenth-century Invisible College was a precursor to the Royal Society. Its members consisted of scientists such as Robert Boyle, John Wallis, and Robert Hooke. The Society's common theme was to acquire knowledge through experimental investigation. Another example is the nineteenth-century Lunar Society of Birmingham, an informal club of the leading cultural figures of the new industrial age -- James Watt, Erasmus Darwin, Josiah Wedgwood, Joseph Priestly, and Benjamin Franklin.

In a similar fashion, Edge's, through its Master Classes, gathers together intellectuals and technology pioneers. In this regard, George Dyson, in his summary (below) of the second day of the proceedings, writes:

Retreating to the luxury of Sonoma to discuss economic theory in mid-2008 conveys images of Fiddling while Rome Burns. Do the architects of Microsoft, Amazon, Google, PayPal, and Facebook have anything to teach the behavioral economists--and anything to learn? So what? What's new?? As it turns out, all kinds of things are new. Entirely new economic structures and pathways have come into existence in the past few years.

Indeed, as Erling Norrby, former Secretary of the Nobel committee, noted, the weekend, it was "a remarkable gathering of outstanding minds. These are the people that are rewriting our global culture".

URL: http://edge.org/documents/masterclasses/masterclasses_index.html

2007

A SHORT COURSE IN THINKING ABOUT THINKING
Edge Master Class 2007
DANIEL KAHNEMAN
Auberge du Soleil, Rutherford, CA

LIFE: WHAT A CONCEPT!
An Edge Special Event at Eastover Farm, Bethlehem, CT
FREEMAN DYSON, J. CRAIG VENTER, GEORGE CHURCH, ROBERT SHAPIRO, DIMITAR SASSELOV, SETH LLOYD

2008

A SHORT COURSE IN BEHAVIORAL ECONOMICS
Edge Master Class 2008
RICHARD THALER, SENDHIL MULLAINATHAN, DANIEL KAHNEMAN
Gaige House, Sonoma, CA

2009

A SHORT COURSE IN SYNTHETIC GENOMICS
Edge Master Class 2009
GEORGE CHURCH, J. CRAIG VENTER
Andaz Hotel & SpaceX, Los Angeles

